

The purpose of this portfolio is to allow you to experiment with combining critical study and practical work.

The portfolio will not be assessed in the typical manner. Rather, its purpose is to encourage experimentation; to allow you to take risks in writing that you might not otherwise take. It will be evaluated on a Pass/Fail option. It does, however, factor into your final grade for the course.

The final product is due June 13. It should be presented in a professional manner with the following components:

- **A Contents Page**, listing which activities is included in the portfolio.
- **An Overview**: two to three paragraphs addressing the following (or, indeed, other ideas and issues that you might want to raise arising from the portfolio activities): which activities you found most challenging / rewarding / surprising / engaging, etc., and why; how any of the activities prompted you to think about literacy in general, particularly writing and language.
- **FOUR portfolio activities** selected from the six below.

There are six portfolio activities included in this activity description; you may take them in any order you wish.

## 1 **Because the Form of Words Matter**

- A Choose any ONE item that you might find in a grocery store checkout line. In three sentences (of no more than 100 words in total) describe that item to a young child.
- B Now try to adapt your written description to the form of Blake's 'The Sick Rose' from *Songs of Experience* (1794); in other words, turn your prose into poetry, carefully following the model of Blake's short poem.

*The Sick Rose*

O rose, thou art sick!  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night  
In the howling storm

Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy,  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy.

**This is an experiment in form; the aim is not to labor for many hours to produce great poetry! It does not matter if you do not meet the same metrical and rhyming schemes of Blake's original, or if you depart from your prose description.**

C In no more than one page, reflect on the key differences between your prose and poetry versions. You might, for instance, consider some of the following questions:

- How does the placing of words in the poetry version serve to emphasize particular meanings, and how does this differ from the prose version?;
  - Does the sound of words in the poetry version (such as alliteration) serve to emphasize particular words, and how does this differ from the prose version?;
  - Does the poetry version say more or less than the prose version?
  - Which is the more effective piece?;
  - Which is the more interesting piece?
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## **2 Language Awareness**

Write no more than one paragraph on the following:

If language is a web, are you a spider or a fly?

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## **3 Ruining a Poem**

A curious alien has no understanding of drink. You must give it insight into ONE or TWO of the following drinks:

- a) water
- b) tea
- c) coffee
- d) beer

Even more curiously, the alien has a full understanding of both the Appalachian English dialect and a love of verse.

Your task is as follows:

- A Write 4-8 lines of verse addressing ONE or TWO of the above drinks. Your verse may take any form: it does not have to rhyme, nor reach a conclusion. However you must use vocabulary, language patterns, and exhibit a cultural awareness of the Appalachian region.
  - B Now try to ruin the original sense, emphasis, meaning or mood of your poem by: changing the Appalachian linguistic patterns into that of Standard English.
  - C In no more than one page reflect on the impact that the different versions have on the poem by answering the following: Which is the more effective piece? Why? Which is the more interesting piece? Why?
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#### **4 Argument and Form: The Last Piece of Chocolate**

- A There is only one piece of chocolate left in the whole country. Only one of three people may be allowed to eat this ultimate piece: your friend, a prisoner, or the president. In no more than 100 words make the case for who should be allowed to eat the last piece of chocolate. Your case will be heard by two individuals: a 16 year-old female and a 65 year-old lawyer.
  - B Now try to adapt your argument to a series of text messages.
  - C In no more than one page reflect on the key differences between the prose and text message versions. Consider the following questions:
    - How is the argument expressed differently between the prose and text message version?;
    - Does the selected lingo in the text message version serve to emphasize particular things? Does this differ from the prose version?;
    - Does the text message version say more or less than the prose version?
    - Which is the more effective piece? Why?;
    - Which is the more interesting piece? Why?
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#### **5 Audience**

‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.’

Can he be right? Write no more than one page in response.

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## 6 Varieties of English

1. This is the way the King James Version of the Hebrew Bible translates one of the Ten Commandments: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' (Exodus 20.14).
  2. Translate the same commandment into ***two*** different varieties of modern English (e.g. standard English, dialect, slang, text messaging, etc.). Here you are free to experiment with standard and non-standard varieties of the language and formal or informal modes of communicating the same idea.
  3. In no more than one page, analyze the three English translations. How (if at all) does the meaning of the commandment change in each version? How will the meanings of each change for different audiences? Can you identify their socio-linguistic contexts?
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*\*NOTE:*

*The assignment has been tweaked from  
the original version found online at:  
[www.kent.ac.uk/english/writingwebsite  
/workshop/docs/portfolio.doc](http://www.kent.ac.uk/english/writingwebsite/workshop/docs/portfolio.doc)*

## Assignment: Experimentation with Language Portfolio

### Rubric

Each of the components listed below are required for successful completion of the assignment. Keep in mind: the assignment is evaluated on a pass/fail option in order to allow for risk-taking with writing. **It does factor into your overall grade.**

#### \_\_\_\_\_ Table of Contents

- Details activities found in portfolio
- Follows acceptable format

#### \_\_\_\_\_ Overview

- Two to three paragraph reflection on challenging, engaging, rewarding, etc. activities and how activities prompted thought-processes on literacy

#### \_\_\_\_\_ Portfolio Activities

- Four writing pieces have been selected and include all required components
  - Because the Form of Words Matter: Grocery Store Item (A, B, & C)
  - Language Awareness: Spider or Web (one paragraph explanation)
  - Ruining a Poem: Appalachian and Standard English (A, B, & C)
  - Argument and Form: The Last Piece of Chocolate (A, B, & C)
  - Audience: Humpty Dumpty (maximum one page response)
  - Varieties of English (translation of commandment into 2 varieties with maximum one page analysis)